



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

WMCA Board

Date	20 July 2018
Report title	Environment Portfolio Priorities - Progress Update
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Report has been considered by	WMCA Programme Board - 6 July 2018

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Agree revised membership and remit of the WMCA Environment Board.
- (2) Note progress over the last nine months and emerging priorities.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This paper needs to be considered by the Board to approve the strengthening of the WMCA Environment Board.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The WMCA is committed to the delivery of clean, inclusive and resilient growth. To achieve this we seek to take a longer-term and integrated approach of delivering jobs, homes, and transport that will also improve our environment and communities. Overall sustainability reporting on economic, social and environmental progress built into the WMCA Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Performance Management Framework and delivered through the projects and programmes we fund.
- 2.2 To help provide independent advice, monitoring, and coordination and engagement with a diverse range of local networks and partners, the WMCA currently works with Sustainability West Midlands (SWM).
- 2.3 In September 2017 the WMCA Board agreed environment priorities, the ambition to become a 'best in class' Combined Authority in our approach to sustainability over the next 2 years, and the creation of an WMCA Environment Delivery Board to drive the work needed.
- 2.4 The workstreams are shown below. Progress will be reported through the Environment Board.
- Environment Delivery Board and Action Plan, Strategy and Monitoring, Benchmarking and Reporting
 - WMCA Internal Estates, Operations, Communications and Environmental Management
 - Green Energy and Carbon Emissions
 - Green Business and Finance Green Buildings and Retrofit
 - Natural Environment
 - Air Quality and Low Carbon Vehicle Opportunities
 - Commercial Waste
 - Brownfield Land - led by the Housing and Land Delivery Board.
- 2.5 The second national benchmark of CA 'best in class' approaches to sustainability will be out in October and progress will be considered by the Environment Board and reported to the CA Board. Appendix 3 sets out the priorities for the environment plan for the next two years.

Next steps

2.6 The WMCA Environment Delivery Board is driving progress on the workstreams above working with the portfolio holder and officers.

- 2.7 Given the strategic priority of improving air quality, the complexity of the issue and the role and duties of local authorities it is clear that to make the progress required we need to establish the Board with elected member representation. Many of the other issues that will have most impact on the environment of the West Midlands will also need the direct involvement and leadership of member local authorities, who also have most of the statutory duties and powers.
- 2.8 We are therefore proposing to expand the Board so that it operate on a similar model to other WMCA Boards, chaired by the WMCA Portfolio holder for Environment, and membership will be the Councillors who are the Cabinet members for Environment or recommended from the 7 constituent authorities, and 3 representatives of the sub-regional geography recommended from the non-constituent group. The current officer and partners group will continue to meet as a working group to support the Board and continue to coordinate a range of workstreams. Officer support and secretariat will be provided from within the CA.
- 2.9 The first meeting of the new WMCA Environment Board on 10th September in 2018 will include an opportunity to review progress on:
- The development of a regional low emissions strategy
 - Annual update on progress on the environmental priorities plan
 - Approval of future two year environment priorities plan.

3.0 Wider WMCA Implications

This proposal helps strengthen the WMCA delivery of the environment and the delivery of key Manifesto, SEP, and annual plan commitments.

4.0 Financial Implications

The WMCA will provide support to the new Environment Board.

5.0 Legal Implications

None at this stage.

6.0 Equalities Implications

Part of the sustainability review and benchmarking focused on the health inequalities agenda between the gap between the worst and best performing areas with the WMCA SEP area, and by gender. It is the intention of the work programme to indirectly contribute and support the work carried out by other parts of the WMCA within this area, for example by improving air quality and the inclusive growth unit.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Highlights of WMCA progress on the Environment 17/18 (extract from WMCA Annual Plan 2018/19)

- Overall good progress on clean growth showing a 24% increase in economic productivity whilst achieving a 18.3% decrease in carbon emissions in the WMCA area (2010-2015 which is the latest comparable data in April 2018).
- The UK's first annual benchmark of Combined Authorities on overall sustainability performance around areas such as leadership, strategy and delivery by SWM ranked the WMCA second. The WMCA has committed to become 'best in class' within two years.
- The creation of a new Environment Portfolio lead and agreed set of priorities, developed at a summit with the Mayor and the Climate Change Committee, supported by an Environment Delivery Board of local partners coordinated and monitored by SWM.
- Working with SWM business club networks and other partners, the WMCA has improved the coordination of existing business support and funding, promoting over £510m of accessible low carbon funding for local businesses and communities.
- The West Midlands Science and Innovation Audit launched by the Mayor identified international strengths in low carbon transport, buildings, and energy. This was reflected later in the year within the UK Government Clean Growth and Industrial Strategies and a successful bid to host the £80m UK battery research centre in Warwick.
- The second devolution deal contained a commitment to recognise the existing regional Energy Capital partnership, support a WMCA- wide energy strategy, and support a regional energy commission to explore potential innovation zones to pilot new regulation and investment in order to stimulate new energy companies, products and services.
- The WMCA held a roundtable with industry and local partners on air quality to begin to develop a longer-term roadmap to go beyond short- term compliance on a single pollutant, and tackle a wider range of pollutants to meet the SEP 2030 targets and stimulate local economic opportunities.
- Research was commissioned by the Sustainable Housing Action Partnership and the West Midlands Housing Officers Group to identify good sustainability practice for new build standards for housing, planning policies, and methods of construction.

Appendix 2: Developing a Strategic Approach to Air Quality for the WMCA

Informal consultation with internal and external stakeholders including local authorities shows that there is clear appetite for the West Midlands to develop a strategic approach on Air Quality and a low emissions strategy and delivery plan, – similar to the approach used by Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, and partly by London in their new Environment Strategy. This is emerging good practice for our major urban areas.

We are proposing that this strategic plan will be steered by the new Environment Board and agreed by the CA board.

Emerging principles for a West Midlands approach to Air quality will be considered by the board but could include:

- Build on existing powers and duties of individual local authorities, who remain responsible for delivery and direction in their areas.
- Keep a strategic approach to improving air quality by continuing to measure an overall basket of air quality indicators, and greenhouse gases, not just Nitrogen Dioxide.
- Develop a grand challenge to address clean growth and mobility as part of WMCA Local Industrial Strategy and bid for Government funding.
- Develop a Low Emissions Strategy to help coordinate monitoring, grand challenge actions, and scale up local good practice.
- WMCA to use Environment Board Delivery Plan to lead by example, through building standards, transport contracts etc.

Appendix 3: Highlights of WMCA Environment Priorities 18/19 (extract from WMCA Annual Plan 2018/19)

- The Environment Delivery Board will publish an action plan and report progress on moving the WMCA to become 'best in class' within two years. The WMCA will address capacity gaps identified within the organisation and partners to deliver the plan.
- The WMCA will improve internal and external communication on WMCA activities around sustainability to help identify and promote good practice, enable constructive challenge and help local partners to engage and work together more effectively.
- The WMCA will work to ensure local strengths in clean growth sectors of transport, buildings and energy, as well as the importance of the natural environment, form a key part of the new Local Industrial Strategy, with the ambition to become the UK's first Combined Authority Clean Growth Industrial Strategy.
- The WMCA will work with natural environment partners, businesses, and Government to develop a long-term natural capital investment strategy to help coordinate and attract investment to improve the state and use of natural assets.
- The WMCA will work towards a longer-term roadmap supported by business and local partners to tackle overall air quality issues within the next 10 years, while working with local authority partners on shorter-term priorities.
- The WMCA will consider recommendations from Energy Capital and the Regional Energy Commission on innovation zones.
- The WMCA will promote key sustainability opportunities within WMCA key investment sites to lever local partners' expertise and innovation opportunities to maximise benefits.
- The WMCA will review, and if required, update current sustainability criteria within WMCA funding and monitoring system and building standards.